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TRANSCRIBERS.

A FEW years ago I was a clerk in a lawyer's office in London City—Messrs Samson and Goliath's, the great limited company whom my readers may remember as having brought out the Balloon Parcels' Delivery Scheme and some other notable undertakings. I copied deeds, pasted legal notices of intended railways on church-doors, attended country witnesses up in town on railway and canal bills, and performed various other noble offices, including the fetching of two-penny-worth of bread and cheese for Samson's lunch, for the liberal weekly remuneration of thirty shillings. But this did not satisfy me. Jones, my old school-fellow, was earning three pounds per week at a bill-broker's, 'with perquisites,' as his mamma took care to inform my mamma, in a confidential discussion which they held upon the merits of their respective sons, and which ended in high words, and a temporary disruption of the houses of Jones and Brown. A knowledge of this awoke within me aspirations. Our head-clerk kindly advised me to learn shorthand as a means to advancement; and with much perseverance I mastered the art. I was in consequence promoted to be the medium of Goliath's communications to clients, and rough drafts of bills of costs, and my salary was raised to a then gratifying height. At this juncture of affairs I met with Lucy. Description of her would be needless to those who have a Lucy, and useless to those who have not. Lucy, the guileless, talked of velvet hangings and marble vases for her future drawing-room, totally oblivious of my lengthening face. Velvet hangings! I thought; then I must still have more money. I propounded my difficulty to a friendly shorthand writer of a neighbouring office. 'Nothing easier,' said he; 'do some transcribing of an evening for the shorthand writers.' It was just the thing; that very day I was introduced to the joys and toils of transcribing; and I now propose to tell you what it is, and how it is done.

I must premise that the shorthand writer works for various employers. The solicitor stands first

on his list, for which reason we find that shorthand writers most do congregate near the law-courts. After the day's labour of talkee-talkie in the courts, comes the night's labour of putting the talk into writing, for the solicitor conducting a case requires notes of one day's proceedings written out and laid on his table by nine o'clock the next morning. Perhaps the next most clamorous claimants for the shorthand writer's services are the committees and commissions of the Houses of Parliament. Though the task of recording their proceedings is nominally committed to one firm, yet practically many firms have a jug at the pump, as the number of clerks kept by the lawful monopolist is limited by agreement with other brethren of the craft. The notes taken from this source, too, have to be presented by the following morning. The shorthand writer's next best customer is the editor of small religious and other periodicals, who frequently requires reports of meetings and sermons, but who does not find it pay him to keep a staff of reporters. Then there are scientific, mercantile, and other bodies, holding meetings at regular intervals, reports of which they require, principally for their own edification; and a good connection of this kind is a valued possession. Finally come stray engagements, some of them curious enough—perhaps to take down the ramblings of a fashionable 'medium' for a spirit-struck enthusiast; or a popular comic lecturer, a report of whose witticisms is desired for drawing-room purposes by an aspiring amateur.

Now, a shorthand writer's business could not be profitably worked if a staff strong enough for all emergencies had to be kept, especially in view of the short time allowed for transcription, because the pressure of work is so fluctuating, being great from April to August, and in November, and very light the rest of the year. During his times of greatest pressure, therefore, he and his regular staff generally occupy themselves in note-taking during the day, and in the evening these notes are dictated to, taken down, and written out by an extemporised staff of transcribers, men with a moderate proficiency in shorthand writing.

The mode of procedure is this: the note-taker

gathers round him four or five transcribers; he dictates to No. 1 for ten or fifteen minutes; No. 1 then gives place to No. 2, and commences to write out his notes, and so on; and by the time No. 5 has been supplied with his quantum, No. 1 is ready to take another length. The note-taker can thus dictate his notes without interruption till his book is clear. A good transcriber will write out from fifteen to twenty folios per hour, exclusive, of course, of the time required to take down the matter; but twenty-five folios are occasionally written in an hour by expert hands. Twopence per folio is the price paid for transcription.

Let us now take a peep into the workshop—a moderately sized office, say, on a first floor in Chancery Lane, which has a lively view by day of a water-butt, a dust-bin, and a mouldy house-keeper, eternally ‘cleaning out’ something. The office contains a long mahogany-table, with a leathern table-cloth, upon which is spread a banquet of stationery. On the upper end of the table, near the fire-place, is a small desk. Six or eight chairs are placed at the table, all occupied, as well as the chair at the desk. In one corner is a stool, perched upon which is the office-boy, waiting to run off with transcript, and manoeuvring to get unobserved an occasional bite at an apple in his jacket pocket. In another corner is a washstand, in another a bookcase containing works of reference and used note-books. It is a June evening, and the windows must gaze very wide indeed to keep the place at all comfortably cool. At the desk is a pleasant-looking, silver-haired gentleman, the mainspring of the watch, Mr Circle, now dictating; the other chairs are occupied by individuals busily engaged in writing. It is the height of Mr Circle’s season, and he is obliged to leave his trim villa at Clapham at nine o’clock every morning, and seldom returns to it before eleven and twelve at night. Whispers pass current among the maid-servants of the road in which he lives, that Mr Circle is seldom now seen to go to church, and that mysterious-looking men sometimes glide in and out of the back-garden gate at odd hours on Sundays. The damsels conclude that Mr Circle is a spy upon government, or a coiner of base metal; but we know that they are mistaken: he is only overpressed with business, and is occasionally obliged, against his wishes, to receive visits from his transcribers at unseasonable times. But though very busy, he has usually in store a ramble up the Swiss mountains, or by the trout-streams of North Wales.

Opposite to Mr Circle sits Snellschrift, his head-clerk. Snellschrift is spare and intellectual-looking, with an awful stoop in the shoulders. He is a proficient in the scientific branch of the profession; in much request for geological meetings, where sesquipedalian words fly about; is not afraid to encounter the language even of a professor of anatomy, and shrinks not from botanical terms. But, however great his other merits, his strong point is, that he has never any scruples about his notes. His notes are always right, and he is ready to swear to them in any court in Europe. Let a luckless lecturer or witness fancy that he has been misreported; one interview with Snellschrift is sufficient for him: Snellschrift convinces him in three minutes that he has no more idea what he said than the man in

the moon, and that the notes are as correct as a photograph.

Between the principal and his clerk, down the sides of the table, sit the transcribers, a rather motley half-dozen of men. Clerks from offices form the staple; but waifs and strays from the country press, struggling provincials waiting for London newspaper employment, and young men of good prospects ‘working up’ shorthand, are often represented. Some are gentlemanly looking, some seedy, some intelligent, some vinous. Here we have the depth of shabbiness, the buttoned-up coat with a vestige of soiled linen, and an occasional munch at a seed-biscuit, side by side with the height of smartness, attar of rose handkerchief, curled locks, and mammoth death’s-head pin, which will spend nearly all its evening’s earnings on an oyster-supper and cigars after work is over. Our friend there, Skrag, who is our model of shabbiness, has been a barrister’s clerk in the Temple, but is just now out of a situation. His thoughts at this moment are running on his wife and three children, and the approaching advent of a fourth. If the season is good, and there is plenty of transcribing, he may perhaps earn sufficient to keep afloat till re-engaged, and to pay the extraordinary expenses about to be incurred; and fervently does he pray that there may be a deluge of select committees, and (Heaven forgive him) that people may quarrel violently and go to law, or die and leave disputed wills.

Sitting next to him is a totally different character, Tom Bracy. Bracy, the trim and precise, is (you will hardly believe it) private secretary to a member of the Upper Chamber. How comes he here, at twopence a folio? you will ask. Well, Bracy’s noble Lord considers a hundred-and-twenty pounds a year, united with the refining influences of lunch from the patrician table, reward sufficient for writing epistles commencing ‘Lord Blank presents his compliments,’ and keeping My Lady’s visiting-lists; and as he has appearances to keep up, or fancies he has, which is the same thing, he turns his shorthand capabilities to account in his spare time.

Opposite Bracy sits Wilk, who is a general favourite. He is a railway clerk by day, and by night a transcriber during the reporting season, and an actor at small theatres out of it. It is easy to see that Wilk is the wit of the table. If he only asks a fellow-labourer to lend him a penknife, the corners of all mouths draw up in a smile, for the tone of Wilk’s voice conjures up vivid recollections of his jokes and odd sayings; and let the office be never so busy, Wilk’s ‘last’ will circulate freely round, passing through the non-conductor of Mr Circle without emitting any spark. Circle, of course, knows well enough what is going on, and occasionally reproves Wilk with a sober look, but his mouth always wavers when he does so. In Circle’s temporary absences does Wilk find his most golden opportunities. Imitations of popular performers on the stage and at the bar—not the horizontal, but the legal one—are thrown off one after the other; and his ‘Excuse me, m’lud,’ of a bustling barrister famous for interrupting, afflicts all hearers with a temporary colic. He is letter-perfect in the latest comic songs, and has no end of orders for theatres, which, however, are sour grapes just now. Sometimes he yields to the wit’s besetting sin, and tries to make a butt of poor

Skrag, but Skrag is generally ready with a *quid pro quo*. But for this he abundantly atones by now and again giving up his 'turn' to Skrag, and helping him with an odd sheet or two. Further down, there is MacQuiddar the canny, seeking his fortune, which he has as good as found in his habits of thorough-going industry. Mac never loses a moment; you might set your watch by him; so many folios written, so much time passed; and if there is any night-work to be done, he may be depended upon, for his Highland constitution can stand anything. Finally, there are one or two non-descripts, who laugh when others laugh, and talk as others do, and lead blameless but uneventful lives. Such are a few transcribers taken at random.

I used much to enjoy my evenings of transcription. On Wednesdays and Saturdays there was little doing generally, and then I would take Lucy out for a walk, and get to bed early, in order to recruit a little. Week after week of this over-work I found to be trying to the health. I am surprised that transcribers stand it so well as they do. When work is continued till after eleven or twelve o'clock, the head begins to hang closer to the paper, conversation ceases, and the poor writer does not allow himself even a yawn or stretch, for fear his highly tensioned nerves may unstring themselves, and refuse to be wound up again that night. Occasionally the sun is up, and five or six o'clock strikes before the note-book is announced to be clear; and the feeling of 'seediness' which naturally pervaded the day following such exhaustive toil, is my most unpleasant recollection of transcribing. But no law is more imperious than the one, that the notes *must* be written out before leaving off. In view of such necessity, I cannot recommend transcribing as a particularly healthy employment.

I was a pretty industrious transcriber for a couple of years, and amassed by it a nice little sum towards house furnishing. A better appointment in the law—in which I had not failed to do a little 'reading-up' at odd times—has now relieved me from the necessity for extra work, and I am at liberty to go house-hunting in the evening with Lucy, a somewhat more arduous, though happily only temporary employment.

JOHN SALTRAM'S WIFE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

SALTRAM staid in town over the week. It was my doing. I could not bear him to go away with that bitter, misanthropical cloud folded round him. I gave myself one or two holidays, and persuaded him to take outings with me. I made him go to the opera and the theatres; and because he thought I enjoyed them, he would take tickets and go with me. He was always an unselfish fellow. One evening we went to the Gaiety. They had got a French company there just then, and were playing one of Offenbach's comic operettas—*Barbe Bleue*, I think. I don't care much for those sort of things, but I thought it would amuse Saltram, so I suggested going to see it. He only said: 'What a theatre-loving fellow you are, Charlie!' but he came round later to tell me he had taken tickets for two, and would call for me.

We had capital seats in the dress-circle, right in

front of the stage; and as, from the proportions of the theatre, every word is audible, one could not have had a better place. There was some slight little piece first: the *Quaker*, I think—a mere foam-ball of frivolity, but it made me laugh, and even Saltram smiled over its utter absurdity. Then *Barbe Bleue* began. I had gone to speak to some acquaintance in a box, and having been delayed by the lady, who, with a woman's want of knowing the seasonableness of things, *would* enlarge on the enlargement of her youngest boy's tonsils, did not get back to my place till the first scene was nearly through. Then I looked, not at the stage, but at Saltram. His face had turned a dull, greenish white; his eyes were fixed; and the lines about his mouth rigid, as though he were in a fit.

'John,' I said; 'good Heavens! John, what is the matter?'

He did not seem to hear me, and I repeated the question, tapping him somewhat sharply on the arm. Then he said, never moving his eyes from the stage: 'Look there!'

I looked, but saw nothing save Boulotte, the fish-girl, heroine of the piece, making vigorous love to the bashful marquis. Some people in the pit were laughing heartily at the actress's audacity. John's expression was hideous.

'Saltram,' I said again, 'what is it?'

'Don't you see?' he retorted, turning his face with that terrible look on it to me. 'The girl, the actress—*my wife*!'

I thought he was mad; but when I looked more narrowly at the frisky Boulotte, with her short petticoats, Normandy cap, and free manners, I started, and uttered an exclamation, which attracted the attention of two or three people near me. He was right. Those blue, laughing eyes, and curved lips, even the line of black, silky hair waving off the broad, low brow, never could belong to any but the one woman, Hélène Saltram! My agitation recalled John to himself. The deadly pallor remained; but he looked cool and quiet as usual as he said: 'Hush! you disturb the audience. A clever scene, is it not?'

'John,' I said, wondering at the man still more, 'let us go away. You can return and speak to her at the finish, if you like.'

'Speak to her! To what end? My dear Elliott, can you not believe that this woman, ogling and leering at her fellow-mountebank here, is no more to me than any other wretched doll frisking through a ballet, or hanging about a theatre-door outside. I made a fool of myself for a moment. Let it pass; and remember my wife is *dead*—dead and buried four years ago.—I do not think much of Offenbach's genius, do you?'

What was to be done with him? Nothing; and I knew it. We sat through the operetta and after-piece, and his attention never wavered once. Now and then, he even took up his opera-glass to see better, as any other looker-on might have done; and I sat beside him, looking at Boulotte, nothing else. Through all the red and white paint, I could

see that she was thinner than she used to be. Her arms were childishly slender for her size, and her eyes looked larger; but that was all. For the rest, she was just Hélène Despuys in the railway carriage, or Nellie Saltram smiling farewell from the steam-boat; only four years older. It went to my heart to see her so. How Saltram could bear to look on as he did, I could not tell, but he looked his shame in the face, and disowned it as his.

After that evening, I found out that John used to go to the Gaiety night after night, as long as *Barbe Bleue* was being acted, and sit through it without speaking a word to any one. He still talked of going abroad, but it was only talk. I felt within myself that he would not go while his wife was acting on the London boards. She went by the name of Mademoiselle Sainte-Hélène, and appeared to be rather a favourite with the press and public generally. Her acting, though slightly unequal and wanting in vigour, was piquante and lady-like; besides which, she had a pretty face and a good voice.

I made inquiries, and learned that nobody said anything against her reputation. Mademoiselle Sainte-Hélène was 'eminently respectable.'

Barbe Bleue had a long run. I happened to be dining with Saltram on the last night, and I asked if she had ever recognised him; he looked annoyed, for we avoided the subject in general, but answered 'No.' Then I took courage to add what I had wished to tell him, that Mademoiselle Sainte-Hélène bore a good name among those who knew her. To this he made no reply whatsoever.

After dinner, he proposed going to the theatre. I said: 'The Gaiety?' at which he coloured slightly, but only said: 'If you like. It is the last night.'

When John went by himself, he usually occupied a pit-stall rather in one corner, but to-night we had seats exactly in front, and not far from the stage—rather a conspicuous position, indeed. Hélène came on, and went through her part in the usual manner, and with rather more than the usual amount of applause. She had just finished a scene in which, after alternately cajoling and bullying the marquis, she has to sing a song. She sang it very well, with great expression, and she was called for again, and encored. Then it was, as she came forward to make her courtesy, that her eyes met those of her husband.

I saw the flash of recognition pass from one to another like an electric shock; but if I had not, I should have known something had happened by the trembling of the arm of the seat on which Saltram's elbow rested. That ceased in a moment, and he looked as sternly composed as ever. *She*—

But the paint hid any varying colour in her face; only her eyes widened into a bewildered stare. She staggered back, and I thought she was going to faint; but the mock-marquis came to her side, and, after a minute's hesitation, the curtain fell without a repetition of the song.

'Why the dickens didn't she sing?' asked a young fop near us. 'Confound these people! They give themselves such airs now, that they seem to forget they're paid to please us, not themselves.'

'A niceish girl,' drawled his friend. 'Vewy decent ankles. Not quite bwass enough for Boulotte, though. Little Fantine had twithe the go in her.'

Despite Saltram's enormous self-command, I saw

him shiver all over, and a black look came over his face. Drawing nearer, I whispered to him to come home. What was the use of staying?

'I will see it out,' he answered fiercely. 'It is the last night, and I go abroad on Monday. I will see it out.'

I said no more; and after rather a longer delay than usual, the curtain drew up. Some one near us said the heat had caused Mademoiselle Sainte-Hélène to faint. The lisping fop said: 'Pwetty cweature!'

I hoped that the manager would come forward and apologise for her non-appearance; but no; whatever Hélène might have suffered from the sudden recognition of her husband, it had passed off now, for she came on again, looking just the same as ever. I saw her eyes go out in search of John, though, and meet his cold, steady gaze with an almost defiant glance. Her figure, which was truly superb, was drawn up to its full height; and through the rest of the piece, if, as people said, she acted better than she had ever done before in her life, she as certainly acted for and at no living being but John Saltram. Every time her eyes turned in his direction, her manner seemed to acquire more force and dash, the very qualities for the absence of which her acting was generally blamed, and when the curtain fell on the final act, the house shook with the applause Boulotte had elicited.

There was an after-piece in which Hélène was also to appear; and as Saltram did not stir, I concluded to wait for the finish as well. It was a sort of pastoral extravaganza, comprising two or three very pretty scenic effects, a good deal of singing, and some dancing. Another woman, *première danseuse* to the company, took the principal part, Hélène having to act a sort of fairy genius. She looked very lovely when she came on, being dressed in a loosely flowing garment of some shining silvery material, which fell in simple classical folds around her, allowing the outlines of her graceful figure to shew to the best advantage, and leaving her neck and arms bare, and white as polished ivory. Her long hair flowed in a cascade of jetty ripples halfway down her back; and on her head a diadem of five silver stars glittered at every movement of her small head, like a wreath of moonlight. A fair vision indeed to any stranger. To her husband—

Well, I am a plain man, and I think I would rather have claimed the dowdiest little girl present as my wife, than that queenly beauty before the light, at whom the whole house clapped their hands, and beat their feet on the floor, in vociferous acclamation. Hélène hardly seemed to hear them. As before, her face was turned towards her husband, and his was set in cool, contemptuous indifference.

I think, if possible, she surpassed herself in this piece. The quieter rôle she had to perform suited her better; and almost every time she spoke or moved, she was greeted with audible exclamations of admiration. In the final scene, a repentant Damon was clasping his easily forgiving Chloe to his manly bosom, when, from the silver mists of evening (a capitally executed effect) was seen to rise the glittering figure of the spirit queen, who, slowly ascending into air, her hands clasped above her head, sang a sort of rhyming benediction over the blissfully intertwined couple on the moonlit green beneath—*over*, not *to*. She sang to John Saltram, no one else. I don't remember the song, but two

lines of its hackneyed burden have run in my head ever since :

Truer and purer than sunlight of morning,
Ever was she whose fond love you were scorning.

She was singing them as she rose into the blaze of stage moonlight pouring down on the scene, her lovely eyes still fixed more yearningly than in defiance on John's stern, impassive face, when of a sudden her clasped hands parted ; she uttered a shrill cry of terror, turned completely over, and after dangling for a moment from the cord which ought to have sustained her, fell head downwards on to the stage.

With her attention distracted by her husband's presence, she had let go the cord above her head ; and so only held by the feet, had overbalanced herself.

I wonder if any man reading this happened to be at the Gaiety that night ; if so, he cannot have forgotten the cry of horror and pity which rose from every corner of the crowded house, the screams of women and children, and the rush for the stage from pit and boxes. Two men reached it long before the rest—John Saltram and I. He had cried out too ; but *such* a cry ! I have never heard the like before or after.

She had fallen on a miniature fountain, made of spiral glass tubes, and had smashed it beneath her. When we leaped on the stage, she was lying on her back in a pool of blood ; but the next moment the crowd surged round and over us, till all three were well-nigh suffocated in the crush. I think I swore at them to keep back ; I am not sure. One is not answerable for such moments of excitement ; but the manager and policeman on duty speedily cleared away the people, driving the dark rush back like an inky wave. They would have sent us off also ; but I said : ' I am a surgeon ; and this is her husband.' Then they let us stop. Saltram never spoke, not one word.

We tried to lift her ; but at the first movement, she uttered a piercing cry. A second effort only produced the same effect. Yet it was impossible to do anything for her, lying there among the shattered débris of glass and pasteboard.

'Speak to her, Saltram,' I said then : 'she will mind you.'

He was bending over her, holding her head on his arm. When I said that, he stooped his face lower over her closed eyes, and whispered : 'Nellie !'

I saw her lips quiver, and signed to him to go on.

'You must let me lift you on to a bed. It will only be a moment's doing. I will try not to hurt you.'

He lifted her head, and I her feet, as he spoke. She shut her teeth hard, but though a moan broke through them, she uttered no cry. I had not overrated her power of self-control, or the force of early obedience to one voice : two traits generally to be found in women. We got her on to a mattress hastily laid on a table, and there I examined her injuries. Her left arm was broken ; so was one of her ribs. She was badly cut in several places ; but these were curable hurts, and I felt hopeful. Then I found that I had not discovered the worst. Falling as she had done, she had injured herself internally ; and when I found that, I knew Helen Saltram had only an hour's

life, at best, in which to make her peace with God and man.

I tried to tell Saltram, but it was not needed ; he read it in my face, in the grasp of my hand ; and the strong man staggered, as though some one had dealt him a heavy blow.

The pain of moving her for the necessary examination, and of binding her wounds, had caused her to faint ; but ere long she opened her great, blue, amethyst eyes, and said : 'Dr Elliott.' Then, after a pause : 'Is John there still ?'

He was standing behind her, and her head rested on his breast. I told her so. She did not seem to hear, for she was moaning heavily ; but presently she said : 'Lay me down. I do not want you to be pitiful to me because I am dying.' Then, after another long gasping breath : 'You know I am dying, doctor, do you not ?'

'Yes, Mrs Saltram, I fear—I greatly fear you are.'

Through all the pain she was suffering, a smile gleamed over her pale lips as she said : 'Fear, doctor, when it will set your friend free !'

I could not bear to hear her, and see the mute, grim agony in the man's face above her ; and I answered warmly : 'For Heaven's sake, do not speak in that way, Mrs Saltram. If you never believed in your husband's love before, trust it now ; and do not die at enmity with him, whom you promised at the altar to cleave to, till death did you part.'

'I am not at enmity with him,' she answered faintly, but steadily. 'He is with me. Ask him, and he will tell you so. He always speaks the truth. He has wronged me cruelly, but I have forgiven him. I am going to speak the truth now, and then he may forgive me if he will.'

I put some cordial to her lips, and begged her not to exert herself. Even Saltram spoke, very gently, as though he were soothing a child.

'I have forgiven everything, Nellie. Rest now in peace.' She only reiterated : 'I will tell you before I die ;' and we had to let her have her way. What she said, I give in her own words, just as they came, in short, panting gasps from her white lips.

'Dr Elliott, I loved John—I loved him from the first moment I saw him. I left everything for him, because I loved him so much. I was fond of my father, though he was never kind or gentle to me ; but I left him for John. I left the nuns who were like mothers to me, and whom I loved dearly, for him. I used to cry about it sometimes, when I was alone ; but I made light of it to him, lest it should grieve him that he had grieved me. . . . We were very happy ; I was, at least, for a while ; Naples was so gay—*ravissante*, and John so good. People admired me, and I liked to be admired, and hear myself called beautiful. *Que voulez-vous ?* I had only seventeen years. I liked John to be admired too ; it made me proud. He was angry if I was praised. Then I teased him, for I knew he loved me ; and I was only a child. He took me to England. I hated it. I hated Yorkshire more, it was so cold and bleak. I hated the people most ; they were colder still. I tried to be polite ; but they would not have me. Then I gave up trying ; and John was vexed. He liked them ; they were his people. . . . I grew very unhappy. John grew cold and hard. Yet I thought he loved me, that he would love me better if we were back in bright,

beautiful Paris. . . . We could not go, with my father there and disowning me. . . . John brought me to London for a week. I met there the Baron de Montigny. He was to have married me—you recollect? He was very kind and gentle now, and promised to reconcile my father to me. I did not tell John. He had grown so jealous, I was afraid to speak of a man to him; and he hated the baron. . . . After I went back to Yorkshire, De Montigny wrote to me. He sent the letters through my maid. They were all about my father, and how he progressed in his intercession—nothing else. As I had not told John at first, I dared not now. I loved him dearly, but I was afraid of him, and I meant to tell him all when my father had yielded; and beg him to come back to Paris for a while, and let us be happy again. . . . One day, John found out about the letters. My maid told him, and gave him a letter of mine to the baron. John put it in the fire. He was too honourable to read it, or he would have known all; but he came to me, and standing in my room, told me quite coolly—*me*, a lady, a girl of nineteen, his own wife! that I was intriguing against him; that I was a bad woman, an unfaithful wife. . . . When he said *that* to me, I knew his love was gone. I was passionate; and he had wronged and insulted me. I could not stay with him, see you, Dr Elliott, after that; and I said I would go to my father. . . . De Montigny had written to me the day before to tell me my father wished to see and forgive me. The baron was in Yorkshire; and he begged me to meet him next day in the Park. . . . I saw him there, and told him I would go to my father at once. Then he said he would take me; and he did. When we got to Paris, he told me my father had gone to Brittany on business, and we must follow him. I agreed; and he took me to a château near the sea-coast.—Dr Elliott, he had deceived me! My father had never written, never heard from him. It was all a lie. He thought to make me love him by such means as these—I left him on the instant, and went to a little inn. I was ill there of a fever; and when I got well—it was many weeks—I wrote to my father. I got no answer. I wrote again. Then he sent me word that I had disgraced him doubly, and was no child of his. Thrice wronged, you see, doctor! What could I do? And I was little more than a child. I tried to teach; but no one would take me without a reference—me, a penniless girl in shabby finery. Then I got an engagement in a country theatre. I was always fond of acting. I have been an actress ever since; and while I have earned my bread, no living being has whispered a word against me. Ask, and you will hear it is true. You can see the baron's letters too; they are all at my lodgings; and the address of the inn at Brittany. That is all I had to say, except'—

Her breathing came in short, irregular sobs. There was a cold moisture on her brow, a mist of tears in her eyes.

'John,' she said, turning her face so as to look into his—and her lips were parted in the same yearning appeal I had seen in the fairy queen's glowing face—'won't you forgive me, now I am dying, and have taken the cloud off your life? We were both to blame; but I love you. O John, I always loved you!'

The last words were said with her lips glued to his, with his arms round her body, with his scalding

tears, the first I had ever seen John Saltram shed, wetting her white face.

I went and sat down on a bale of matting in the corner, and cried covertly. I suppose it was very unmanly, and unprofessional, but I can't help that. Outside, the cabs and omnibuses rolled on in a ceaseless dull roar; and the rain pattered down like millions of tiny feet on the muddy London stones.

She died a little after one o'clock that morning. John sent some one for a priest (she was a Catholic, you remember), and one came, and gave her the sacrament. I don't know what he said to her, of course; but when it was all over, he told me she wanted to speak to me. She was lying in John's arms then, with a smile on her lips; and she just moved her cold fingers for me to take them in mine, as she said:

'Dr Elliott, I told you that John had wronged me, and I forgave him. I know now it was I who wronged him by leaving him. I made his life desolate, and his heart hard, by letting him believe me false to him. You were always his friend, that is why I tell you. I have been a bad wife, and he loved me more than I deserved. Take care of him, and love him for me when I am gone.'

John tried to interrupt her, to take the blame on his own shoulders. I could see his heart was broken, and so did she. One of his hands was lying on her breast, and she dropped her face and kissed it. That was the last effort. I think she died a minute or two afterwards.

John Saltram is living still. I don't know whether I take care of him, or he of me; a little of both, I fancy. He has sold his estate in Yorkshire, and we two old men live together in London, where I still practise occasionally. You may give up your rich patients; but if the poor won't give you up, what are you to do? Five or six times in the year, Saltram leaves me for a day. I never ask where he has been, nor does he allude to it; but I know the quiet churchyard, ten miles from London, where Nelly Saltram's body lies buried with John's broken heart; and I know that if I live the longest, I shall one day stand beside the grave, and see another coffin laid upon that which holds the thoughtless young wife whom Saltram understood so little, and lost so early!

WILL-MAKING ECCENTRICITIES.

WILLS have been made of every conceivable shape and form. We find them consisting of only a few words, like that of Mr Kenneth Macaulay, dated April 1865, which merely said: 'One thousand pounds to my brother Tom; all the residue to my dearest wife absolutely;' and we have seen them in the shape of portentous-looking documents, containing a score or more of folios. Amongst the number are numerous interesting specimens of original composition, both prose and verse. Many examples of poetical wills, written in rather rough doggerel, are extant, one of the most amusing being that of a Mr Joshua West, and dated December 13, 1804:

Perhaps I die not worth a groat,
But should I die worth something more,
Then I give that and my old coat,
And all my manuscripts in store,

To those who shall the goodness have
To cause my poor remains to rest
Within a decent shell and grave.
This is the will of JOSHUA WEST.

Another specimen of this kind is the production of one William Jackitt, of the parish of St Mary, Islington, and for thirty years a clerk in the firm of Messrs Fuller and Vaughan, once of Cornhill. It was proved at Doctors' Commons on the 17th July 1789.

I give and bequeath,
When I'm laid underneath,
To my two loving sisters, most dear,
The whole of my store,
Were it twice as much more,
Which God's goodness has granted me here.
And that none may prevent
This my will and intent,
Or occasion the least of law racket,
With a solemn appeal
I confirm, sign, and seal,
This, the true act and deed of WILL JACKITT.

Very frequently the most extraordinary provisos and conditions are attached to the wills of certain eccentric individuals. Thus, at Montgaillard, in 1822, a man died who by his friends and relations had been called the 'misanthrope.' In his will he left directions that any of his relations who should shed tears at his funeral should be disinherited; but that he who laughed the most heartily should be sole heir. He also ordered that neither the church nor his house should be hung with black cloth, but that on the day of his burial those places should be decorated with flowers and evergreens. In addition to this, all the musicians of Montgaillard and its environs were to attend the funeral, and fifty of them were to open the procession with hunting-tunes, waltzes, and minuets.

A Mr J. Sergeant, of Leicester, a staunch upholder and practiser of early rising, inserted a clause in his will to the following rather disagreeable effect to those concerned: 'My nephews are fond of indulging themselves in bed in the morning, and I wish them to prove to the satisfaction of my executors that they have got out of bed in the morning, and either employed themselves in business or taken exercise in the open air, from five till eight o'clock every morning, from the fifth of April to the tenth of October, being three hours each day; and from seven to nine o'clock in the morning from the tenth of October to the fifth of April, being two hours every morning.' This was to be done for some years, to the satisfaction of the executors, who were empowered to excuse the heirs in case of illness; but even then the task was to be made up when they had recovered—the penalty, in case of non-performance of the conditions, being total exclusion from participation in the property. The reason given by Mr Sergeant for these conditions were, that 'temperance makes the faculties clear, and exercise makes them vigorous. It is temperance and exercise that can alone insure the fittest state for mental or bodily exertion.' The inconvenience accruing to the recipients of this bequest was, however, far surpassed by that resulting from the condition attached to the will of a spiteful old citizen of Berlin, to the effect that the heir should always wear thin white linen garments, and at the same time indulge in no extra under-clothing. If this condition were only once violated, the money was to go to the executors.

Several of our London churches have had bequests made to them with rather strange conditions attached. In the window of the middle aisle of St Mary's, the mother church of the parish of Lambeth, is painted a pedler with his pack and dog, said to represent the person who bequeathed to the parish of Lambeth 'Pedler's Acre,' provided that his portrait and that of his dog were perpetually preserved in one of the church windows. When the painting was first put up is unknown, but it existed in 1608. 'Pedler's Acre,' originally called the 'Church Hopes,' or Hopys (an isthmus of land projecting into the river), is entered in the register as bequeathed by a person unknown.

Another remarkable class of bequests is that in which the testator leaves the whole, or some part of his body, to one or more of his friends, to be used for the furtherance of science or art amongst his survivors. Such was the bequest of Professor Byrd Powell, an American physician and phrenologist. 'Furthermore,' ran the will, 'I give and bequeath to Mrs T. Kinsey, of Cincinnati, Ohio, *my head*, to be removed from my body for her use, by H. T. Keckeler, or his agents.' The said Mrs Kinsey was one of the professor's most enthusiastic pupils. Some weeks after the remains of this lover of his art had been placed in the vaults of a cemetery, the bequest was carried out, the executors of the deceased employing Dr Curtis, of Cincinnati, to take off the head, which forthwith came into the possession of Mrs Kinsey. Dr Gall, another phrenologist, who died in Paris in 1823, left a similar direction in his will.

In University College is the skeleton of Jeremy Bentham. This eccentric individual left his body by will to Dr Southwood Smith, who wrote a letter on the subject to *Notes and Queries*. 'Jeremy Bentham left by will his body to me for dissection. I was also to deliver a public lecture over his body to medical students and the public generally. The latter was done at the Well Street School. After the usual anatomical demonstration was over, a skeleton was made of the bones. I endeavoured to preserve the head untouched, merely drawing away the fluids by placing it under an air-pump over sulphuric acid. By this means the head was rendered as hard as the skulls of the New Zealanders, but all expression was gone, of course. Seeing this would not do for exhibition, I had a model made in wax by a distinguished French artist. . . . I then had the skeleton stuffed out to fit Bentham's own clothes, and this wax likeness fitted to the trunk. . . . The whole was then inclosed in a mahogany case, with folding glass doors; and I ultimately gave it to University College, where it now is.'

In 1871, the *New York Times* stated that a Mr S. Sanborn, of Medford, Massachusetts, latter, made and recorded a will by which he bequeathed his body to Professors Louis Agassiz and Oliver Wendell Holmes, of Harvard University, requesting that it should be prepared 'in the most scientific and skilful manner known to the anatomical art,' and placed in the museum of anatomy attached to the university. He also directed that two drum-heads should be made of his skin, which were to be presented to his 'distinguished friend and patriotic fellow-citizen, Warren Simpson, drummer, of Cohasset,' on condition that he should beat, or cause to be beaten, on the said drum-heads the national air of *Yankee Doodle*, at the base of the

monument on Bunker's Hill, at sunrise on the 17th of June annually. On one of the drum-heads was to be inscribed 'Pope's Universal Prayer,' and on the other the 'Declaration of Independence,' as it originated in the brain of its illustrious author, Thomas Jefferson. The parts of his body useless for anatomical purposes he desired to be 'composted for a fertiliser for the purpose of nourishing the growth of an American elm to be planted, or set out, in some rural public thoroughfare, that the weary wayfaring man may rest, and innocent children playfully sport beneath the shadow of its umbrageous branches, rendered luxuriant by my carcass.'

These are but a few instances amongst many. We shall mention one more, that of Professor Morlet. This gentleman, who filled the chair of geology in the Academy of Lausanne for some years, left a clause in his will, directing that his head should still be made useful to science after his death, and that it should be preserved in the museum at Bern, with his name legibly engraved on the skull, so as to prevent its ever being mistaken for any other. His wish was complied with, and the skull may be seen in the anatomical department of the collection at Bern.

We hear of a Mr Zimmerman, who died in 1840, and gave by will particular directions for his funeral. 'No person,' he says, 'is to attend my corpse to the grave, nor is any funeral bell to be rung, and my desire is to be buried plainly, but in a decent manner; and if this is not done, I will come again—that is to say, if I can.' Quite as whimsical was the injunction of a Mrs Reading, who by will in 1870, requested her coffin to be packed in a plain deal box, and sent to Branksome Tower by a goods train, so that the charge for carriage to the place of burial would be no greater than for an ordinary package. We do not know how this *post-mortem* attempt to cheat the railway companies succeeded.

The fear of being buried alive has often led to the attachment to wills of very strange clauses. The will of a Mr John Lewis Greftulke, proved on October 8, 1867, contained an instance of this kind. It ran thus: 'I do not wish to be buried, but that my body be embalmed and placed in a coffin, the lid of which shall be glazed, and not nailed down, so that the body be not deprived of air and daylight, and ultimately buried, if the law will permit.'

Our contemporary, the *Illustrated London News*, has lately presented a number of amusing eccentricities of this kind. One of the cases quoted is that of a Mr Budd, who left a particular estate to his eldest son, provided he did not wear a moustache; if he did, the estate was to go to his second son. Another case, equally whimsical, is that of Mr James Robbins, who, in the event of his dear wife not complying with his request to wear a widow's cap after his decease, enjoined that she was to suffer a diminution of an annuity from L30 to L20; and she was to undergo the same penalty if she married again.

An amusing instance of carrying a joke beyond one's own death was that perpetrated in his will by Jasper Mayne, a humorous dramatic writer of the seventeenth century. In this document he left an old trunk to his man-servant, saying that he would find in it something to make him drink. When the funeral was over, the poor fellow

hastened to enjoy his treasure, but, on opening the trunk, found only a red herring!

There could be given innumerable instances of *post-mortem* benevolence, often of a whimsical character. We content ourselves with the following: In a late number of the *Times*, there appeared an account of two curious customs which took place on Good Friday. One of them occurred just outside the church of St Bartholomew-the-Great, Smithfield, in the oldest churchyard in the city. The venerable incumbent of the parish put down twenty-one sixpences on a gravestone, which the same number of poor widows picked up. The custom is nearly as old as the church, being the result of the will of a lady, who left money for the annual donation, and the preaching of a sermon. On the same day, at the church of All-hallows, Lombard Street, a sermon was preached under similar provisions of the will of Peter Symonds, dated 1587, and gifts distributed to sixty of the younger scholars of Christ's Hospital, each receiving a new penny and a bunch of raisins. Under the same will the children of Langbourn Ward Schools who help in the choir, and the children of the Sunday-school, received each a bun and various sums of new money, ranging from a penny to a shilling, besides a shilling and a loaf to each of the poor of the parish. The various gifts were distributed over the tomb of the donor, until it was effaced by railway operations.

LADY LIVINGSTON'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER XXII.—IN WHICH THE BLINDS ARE DRAWN DOWN.

LADY LIVINGSTON, it may be remembered, had the reputation of being eccentric, and was beyond doubt capricious, as ladies of her age, and in the uncontrolled enjoyment of ample means, are apt to become. Consistent as she was in her unswerving affection for Beatrice, she was none the less prone to take fancies, as the colloquial phrase has it, to strangers, and to be pleased for a time with new faces and modes of speech. She had at first shewn a marked partiality for Violet Maybrook, and now she was disposed to think favourably of a very different person—Aphy Larpent. This young lady had for some little time past been accepted in the character of Miss Fleming's music-mistress, and she had spared no pains and neglected no artifice whereby to ingratiate herself with the old peeress. Hence, it came about that when the piano was closed and the morning's lesson over, the little girl from Canada, who sang like an angel, and whose deportment was always simple and modest, was invited to remain for some hours as a guest in the house which she frequented professionally. That Miss Larpent should be included in the dowager's domestic circle, was in the highest degree distasteful to Violet, her former friend; but to remonstrate would have been useless and impertinent, nor was it safe to arouse suspicion by any hint as to the antecedents of Lady Livingston's new favourite. The elf herself felt a thrill of secret triumph as she took her seat at the dowager's table, and was permitted to associate with those who, had they known the truth, would have shrunk from her contact as if she had been plague-stricken. She had little fear lest by some untoward accident her history should one day be revealed. The two who

knew it, Dashwood and Violet, had sufficient motives for their silence, nor was it probable that any one conversant with colonial scandal would enlighten Lady Livingston's ignorance on that head.

It is uncertain what motives predominated in inducing the sister of Bruce Larpent to exert herself, as she unquestionably did, to conciliate the aged and wealthy kinswoman of her gentle pupil. Something was due, no doubt, to the gratification which she experienced in thus forcing her company on Violet, on the early friend whose avoidance had humiliated her, and of whose superiority she had been jealous since the days of their childhood. But this was not the only impulse. Her native cunning, sharpened by the difficulties of her position, had urged this little Ishmaelite to neglect no opportunity of learning a secret or of winning the confidence of those above her in social standing. Therefore, she voluntarily discharged, for Lady Livingston's behoof, many of the duties which ordinarily fall to the lot of a salaried companion, writing letters at her dictation, examining accounts, and executing scraps of necessary but monotonous background in some gorgeous piece of Berlin wool-work, the credit of which would belong to her noble employer.

It fell out, not unnaturally, that on the day which succeeded that stormy scene which had ensued on Sir Frederick's formal proposal for the hand of Beatrice, the music-mistress found Miss Fleming in no mood to profit by her instruction. Her headache, which she pleaded in excuse for a day's idleness, was more genuine than the conventional *migraine* of fashionable society often is, and the very sight of her pale, sad face proved to the observant elf that something of note had occurred; nor was it very difficult to form a conjecture which at any rate came near to the truth. Violet, who had obtained permission to visit London, was at that very moment on her way to Jekyl Street, and Aphy willingly undertook to be Lady Livingston's attendant sprite until her return. The dowager was herself in a condition of nervous excitement, which only work could appease, and had persuaded herself that it was of immense importance that she should be portentously busy in clearing off an arrear of correspondence.

The dowager's custom was to write, or to cause to be written, such letters as she despatched, in her own room, so-called, in the west wing of the nabob's stately mansion. There was so much of unused space in that great house, that had its mistress been so minded, she might have had a half-dozen of studies or libraries wherein to pen her epistles. But women, of whatsoever rank, have a preference for the chamber that is their own peculiar realm, and Lady Livingston conformed unconsciously to the practice of the medieval dames, the best part of whose life was passed in that 'bower' which we moderns should unpoetically designate as a bedroom. Where does Clorinda indite those gushing epistles to dear, darling Araminta, and those others, on scented pink paper, to Captain Spurrier, whose betrothal ring—he is a sad Bluebeard, in his platonic fashion, that Spurrier, and has given away turquoise circlets by the dozen—shines on her 'engaged' finger? Where does Ethel pour those delicious confidences into the sympathetic ear of Rose (christened Rosa Matilda, but who has modified her name, by the same right innate which

caused Ephraim Bugg to blossom into Norfolk Howard)? Women are not quite as men are, despite the shrieks of discontented Amazons, and it is not, therefore, wonderful that Lady Livingston should have preferred her own especial room.

It was a pretty room, large, if low, and with flowering-plants clinging to the bricks outside, and pouring their fragrant breath through the opened window. It was furnished in a more cheerful style than was old Sir George's house in Jekyl Street, and it opened into a dressing-room almost as large as itself, and which contained many and many a quaint relic of the days of Lady Livingston's youth. There were the antlers of a Highland stag that 'my lord's' rifle had laid low in days before no gentleman's education was considered perfect until he had 'done' his deer-stalking, and piled up hecatombs of slaughtered grouse on the purple heather of the north. There were presents given to her long ago—marbles from Florence, mirrors from Venice, tinted glass from Prague; here a matchless carving in old oak, stolen from some Flemish church in the Revolutionary wars, and sold for a handful of five-franc pieces to some English 'milor' on the grand tour; there a jar of such ancient porcelain as Tae-pings and gunboats have hardly left unbroken on all the seaboard of China, sent 'with respectful compliments' by some first-officer of an Indiaman who owed his appointment to 'my lord's' influence. There, too, stood a grand structure, a cabinet of tortoise-shell and ivory and satinwood, mounted in gilded brass, and in excellent preservation. This had been a post-nuptial gift on the part of 'my lord' himself, and his relict prized it highly; and to that hour used it as the hiding-place of her very choicest possessions, the letters of dead friends, the old, old trinkets, each perhaps with its own associations, that spoke only to herself, and other treasures.

Lady Livingston was very busy. She not merely dictated, but actually wrote, letters to several persons—to her steward, for instance, at Heavitree, to Goodeve and Glegg, of Bedford Row—her ladyship being as yet quite unaware of the serious mishap which had befallen the elder of those eminent solicitors, and which had, through the exertions of Mr Glegg, who dreaded the circulation of reports damaging to the firm's prosperity, been kept from newspaper publicity—and to other persons. The elf, on the other hand, was kept well employed in balancing sundry complicated accounts. The dowager, like many people of abundant fortune and leisure, paid her tradespeople but at long intervals, although it would have been equally convenient to her to have drawn a cheque weekly to defray her expenses. On this occasion, she shewed an odd eagerness to clear herself with the world, sending the ready Aphy on embassies to Mrs Hart, and signing first one order on her bankers, and then another.

'I must be ready—I must be ready!' she repeated to herself, under her breath, although she had no need for such anxiety, having a large balance of available money, and none but the usual liabilities of a large establishment.

Miss Larpent, who watched her stealthily, could guess that she was under the influence of some haunting thought, that she was intent on exorcising by the spell of active employment. It was evident that she was ill at ease. Hers was an unnatural briskness for a woman of her years. Her eyes were

bright, and there was a flush on her wrinkled cheek, but she looked ill and harassed.

'I wish, my dear,' said the old peeress suddenly, addressing Miss Larpent—'I wish, my dear, that you would fetch me from the tortoise-shell cabinet a packet that you will find—let me think—in the second; no, in the third drawer on the right-hand side, below the large inner compartment where the jewel-case is kept. I have not seen it for years and years; but you will know it at once—a packet of letters tied up with a broad blue ribbon. Here is the key,' she added, 'of the cabinet; and here'—selecting another glittering morsel of steel, with an ivory label attached to it, from amidst the heap of keys which lay upon the desk before her—'is that which unlocks the drawers. Would you mind the trouble of giving me, in that glass, fifty drops from the bottle?—Thank you. What set my head running on those poor old letters, I wonder?' she added; but now she was communing with her own thoughts, not addressing the young teacher of music, who continued to pour out the medicine, as desired, with a steady hand. The fifty drops fell one by one into a modicum of water at the bottom of a wine-glass; and Lady Livingston, taking the glass from Aphy's hand, swallowed the contents. 'It always does me good,' she said, with an air of satisfaction; 'more good than I ever derived from any prescription of Doublefee's. It is very well for men like Sir Joseph to call these people quacks. They do something for us, doctors or no doctors; while the Faculty only watch us as we die by inches, in the regular way.'

From which it may be opined that the phial on the table was prepared according to the recipe of some irregular benefactor of suffering humanity.

'Shall I go for the packet now, Lady Livingston?' asked the smiling elf; and receiving a nod by way of reply, as the old lady dipped her pen in the ink, and recommenced her self-allotted task of writing, she went on her errand at once. The tortoise-shell cabinet stood, it has been already explained, in the adjacent dressing-room, and the door between the two rooms was partly open. Both the keys being labelled, and one of them larger than the other, Aphy Larpent found no difficulty in opening the miniature double doors, and in inserting the key in the third of the small lower drawers, on the right of the central compartment, where stood a large case in crimson morocco leather, with silver mountings; doubtless the jewel-case of which mention had been made. But the third drawer, when opened, proved not to contain anything but some old trinkets, broken or obsolete, an amethyst cross, a necklace and bracelets of Maltese filigree-work, some dozen rings and brooches of small value, a watch set with small diamonds, a string of pearls yellow with age, and a gold chain, to which was attached a locket.

'She spoke of the second drawer; let me try that,' murmured Miss Larpent to herself, as she closed the one drawer, and applied the key to the other. What was it that met her gaze, causing her eyes to flash and glow with an unholy eagerness, and her fingers to contract themselves crisply, like the claws of a bird of prey about to pounce upon the quarry? Why did her sallow cheek redden, and her vulpine mouth become compressed, as she hovered around the open drawer, where, however, there was nothing which at first sight

appeared very tempting to be seen? She was still gazing, when Lady Livingston called out impatiently: 'You are a long time about it, Miss Larpent; surely you can tell one key from the other.' The young music-mistress withdrew a step or two from the cabinet, and stood in the open doorway, looking into the other room.

'I beg your pardon,' she said; 'but I think there was some mistake. I tried the drawers on the right side.'

'But I told you the left side, distinctly told you the left,' cried out Lady Livingston, irritably. 'You young folks are all alike, with no more memory than if you were so many wax dolls. There, there, my dear; I did not mean to scold; but please be careful now, while I finish this note. The third drawer, mind, to the left; I told you so before.'

The dowager, like many of the aged, was tenacious on the subject of her own memory, and somewhat unjust at times to those whose more accurate recollections jarred with her own; but Aphy Larpent knew her habits too well to contradict her; and with a mere, 'Very well, Lady Livingston,' she turned to fulfil her senior's behest. As she did so, with a covert smile on her lips, she looked back. There sat the old peeress, stiffly erect, writing at her huge old-fashioned desk of ebony, with her black lace lappets falling beside her gray hair, her dress of rich brocade, in some pattern of black and lilac, the diamond rings flashing on her soft old fingers—stately to look upon. Miss Larpent never afterwards forgot that sight.

The third drawer on the left being opened, disclosed to view a miniature in its case, a broken fan, some ivory tablets—such as were used in bygone ball-rooms, by beauties long departed, to register the names of partners no longer in the flesh—a few dried flowers, and some eight or ten old letters, the ink of which was faded, and the paper discoloured by age, but which were tied carefully together, as the dowager had said, with a broad blue ribbon. The ribbon—it had lain long in the drawer, and was itself a faded thing, the ghost of a blue ribbon—was tied in what is called a true-lovers'-knot; nor was it hard to guess the nature of the correspondence which it inclosed. Love-letters, doubtless, and probably not penned in his bachelor days, by the Right Hon. the Lord Livingston; to whom, nevertheless, their recipient had been a true wife. There is some romance, perhaps, in all lives, prosaic as they may appear; and perhaps the miniature, and the dried-up flowers, and the shattered fan, and the tablets, and the letters, were all relics of certain early days when her ladyship had dreamed of happiness with him, never destined to be more to her than a half-forgotten shadow of her girlish life, and budding sentiment. Aphy took out the letters, and turned back to re-enter the other room. There sat the old lady, the pen in her hand, and her face bent down, apparently writing.

The old peeress must have been intent upon her task, surely, for she paid no attention to Miss Larpent's entry, or to the—'I have brought the letters, Lady Livingston,' with which the girl announced the execution of her errand. Aphy, who had now reached the middle of the room, suddenly started back, with dilated eyes, gazing on the seated figure in the arm-chair. The figure had fallen forward a little, and the pen, still held

between the fingers, had slipped awkwardly across the sheet of letter-paper, making a long irregular mark, like an inky furrow, but not a straight one. The weight of the body seemed to be supported by the other arm, and as Miss Larpent gazed, it gave way, and dropped forward, the down-turned face resting on the desk.

'You are ill! In the name of Heaven! what is this?' exclaimed the elf, startled into momentary sympathy with the supposed sufferer, to whose assistance she sprang forward. But the hand that held the pen was nerveless; there was no beat of pulsation in the wrist on which the girl's grasp closed; and when she lifted the heavy, helpless head, involuntarily she recoiled, for the glassy eyes, the awful grayness of the blanched face, the parted lips, the motionless features, told their own tale. There was to be no more suffering, no more care, no more anxiety, for Susan Beatrice, Dowager Baroness Livingston, on this earth of ours. And Aphy Larpent knew, and shuddered to know, that she was alone with the dead.

It may have been five minutes later than the instant of making this discovery, or possibly the interval may have been somewhat longer, before Miss Larpent took measures to spread through the house the alarm of the sudden death of its mistress. Perhaps, with all her audacity, and her resources, the shock had overpowered her nerves; and she had needed a brief breathing-time before she was capable of thought or action. As it was, after a pause, which, after all, was of brief duration, the sharp and repeated sound of the bell brought hurrying feet along the corridor of the west wing, and in the doorway, the servant who first arrived was met by the young teacher of music, who was very pale and trembling, with tearful eyes and uplifted hand, that told its own tale before a word had been spoken.

'Very ill—her ladyship—very ill indeed—the nearest doctor,' said the elf, gasping; and there was hurrying to and fro, and shrieks and sobbing of women, and the loud exclamations of men; and in an incredibly short space of time a messenger returned with Dr Eccles. His examination did not last long, and every one knew the verdict before he uttered it. 'It is all over, and I can do nothing: the heart, of course; I always feared as much,' said the young doctor. 'You had better lay her on her bed, poor thing, and darken the room.'

And that was why the blinds were already drawn down when Violet returned from London.

CHAPTER XXIII.—DUST TO DUST.

The grim visitor, Death, throws a tinge of solemnity over surroundings that would otherwise be little else than frivolous or commonplace. The few poor yards of thin black woollen stuff, nailed around the door of some French cottage-home, plead quite as pathetically for the respect due to the mourners within, as do the costly draperies, gorgeous with coronets and armorial bearings wrought in gold thread, and studded with ostentatious tears embroidered in silver, which the rich and noble hang around the church-porches of Paris.

A philosopher might have denied that there was ground-work for any especial repining at the obsequies of the Dowager Lady Livingston, which were

duly performed at Richmond, on the day dictated by custom, by a corpulent undertaker who had buried many of her ladyship's kith and kin. Here, it might have been said, was a person of ripe, nay, of over-ripe, years, who had enjoyed, more or less, the good things of this world so long as it was possible to retain them, and had met with a painless death in the fulness of time. There was no reason for taking a sentimental view of the matter. The tenancy-for-life was over, the banquet-board swept clear; it was the turn of another now, and that was all. Nevertheless, there were tears shed for this rich old matron, who, in spite of occasional ill-humour and spasmodic imperiousness, had yet found out the way to win the hearts of her dependents. The old coachman, who had growled out, scores of times, his caustic comments on her fickleness of purpose and sturdy determination to be obeyed, now led the chorus in her praise. 'Though she was dead,' he declared, surprised into quotation for, perhaps, the first time of his life, 'her name would never die;' and he was very severe with helper and stable-boy for whistling irreverent nigger melodies while his and their good mistress lay in her shroud within the house. Of the other servants, half were really sorry; and the other half, led away by the infection of grief, mourned for their lost lady during all that interval between the death and the burial. There were pensioners of the old peeress, too, who had good reason to grieve, but whose regrets were not purely selfish.

Beatrice Fleming it was on whom the blow fell the most heavily. For days she sat in her room, as if stunned, so sudden, so cruel, had been the stroke which Fate had dealt her, as she deemed, when her protectress, her best, truest, dearest friend, she who had been to her as a mother, was snatched away. She hardly had realised what Lady Livingston had been to her, how the spontaneous affection of that childless old woman had shielded her from the rough storms of the world, until the kind old hand that had given so much was for ever powerless. Beatrice reproached herself, though without reason, as we all are apt to do, of not having been more tender, loving, thoughtful, in her intercourse with her who now lay hushed and still on the couch whence her own strength should never raise her. She took blame to herself that in her natural unhappiness, when persecuted by Dashwood's unwelcome suit, she had not marked the signs which should have told her how near her benefactress was to her end. But in very truth the blame was undeserved. Only the eye of an expert, sharpened by deep anxiety, could have detected the secret approaches by which the citadel of life was undermined.

That Lady Livingston had died, with fearful suddenness, of heart-complaint—that Miss Larpent had been, not precisely in the room, but in that adjacent, executing some wish of the dowager's, when the fatal seizure occurred, was well ascertained. There was mute evidence, no lack of it, that the mistress of the Fountains had been cut off whilst in the midst of her ordinary occupations. The letters, the accounts, remained on the table just as the writer had left them. The very ink in the pen which the dead fingers held was scarcely dry when the servants had been called into the chamber of death. And when the outcries and the frequent iteration of 'Who would have thought it?' had ceased, it appeared that the lamentable

event which had just occurred was exactly what every one, with unanimous prescience, had always expected.

A good many people took thought of Beatrice Fleming and of her prospects. What would she do with Lady Livingston's money, now that it was hers? That she should live in single-blessedness at the Fountains or at Heavitree Hall, was, of course, out of the question. But where would be her residence until the day of her marriage, and who would be the fortunate winner of such a prize matrimonial?

'She is very nice and pretty, and the Heavitree property is quite unencumbered,' said the Most Noble the Marchioness of Blunderbore; 'and then she has birth too—not that men seem to care a straw for that nowadays, when there is money or notoriety, and she ought to do exceedingly well with herself. I did hear some ridiculous rumour that she was engaged to that bankrupt baronet, a cousin of hers—I forget his name. Oh, Dashwood. Yes, yes; that is it: a handsome, good-for-nothing young fellow, grandson to the old doctor, Sir George. But I am sure dear good Lady Livingston would never have tolerated such a preposterous love-affair as that. The man is hopelessly involved, and can't shew his face in society, and who set such a mischievous report afloat, I cannot tell.'

It was the Behemoth who had circulated the particular report which had reached Lady Blunderbore's ears. Rumour seems generally, like the thistle and fungus, to be self-sown; but in this instance Baron Swartz had condescended to propagate in London circles the true story, with which he had by some mysterious means become acquainted, of Beatrice's betrothal. There were many who did not believe in an anecdote which it was to the Jew's interest to spread abroad, and among them was the Duchess of Snowdon, who regarded it as simply incredible that a young woman who had seen something of London should throw herself away on a suitor whose only recommendations were his good looks and the bloody hand in his escutcheon.

'A baronet is all very well when he happens to be rich,' Her Grace had said, when she was informed of Miss Fleming's supposed promise to her disreputable kinsman; 'but she can be called "my lady" on less ruinous terms. It is a pity, of course, that she will be in crape for some time to come, because she loses the best part of the season, but I shall make it a point to invite her to stay with us in Scotland afterwards, and I daresay something satisfactory will occur.' And the duchess was warranted in her vaticinations by the fact, that not a few brilliant marriages had resulted from such visits to Inverinch Castle, N.B., the northern palace of the Duke of Snowdon, where eldest sons and young men of fortune were to be flushed as readily as the close-packed broods of grouse nestling amid the adjacent heather.

Among those whose interest in Beatrice was the keenest was, as was but natural, Sir Frederick Dashwood. But as, when he sent in his name, Miss Fleming 'regretted that she was not equal' to the ordeal of a personal interview, and as he received no reply to his clumsy letter of condolence, the sympathetic baronet was compelled to postpone his intended consolations to his cousin under her present affliction until the day of the funeral. In the meantime, it was profoundly

irritating to him to overhear, as he so often did, the babble of the young subalterns at his club, some of whom 'happened to know' that Beatrice's heritage was about fivefold in excess of the amount first stated, the Heavitree rent-roll being roundly summed at twenty thousand a year, with 'another tenner' of annual thousands from the Consols; while others freely gave and took the odds that the sorrowing heiress would marry, and into the peerage too, before Ascot in the following year. Any event will serve as a peg on which bets may hang, and a young lady's wedding may be as fair a subject for a sporting wager as any other; but the chatter of these pink-faced boys drove Sir Frederick to the limits of his patience. He had not asked, when he drove down to the Fountains, to see Miss Maybrook, being exceedingly dubious as to the reception which he might expect from her. She was capable, as he well knew, of acting with forbearance and generosity on occasion. But there was at least an equal probability that her fiery spirit might lead her to disregard all consideration for her own security, should he test her endurance too severely. It would be better to wait, and if she chose to be a calm and contemptuous spectator of his union with another, to accept the position with the best grace possible. He should at least have a sufficiency of solid pudding to compensate for the lack of praise, and could bear the scorn of the only woman he had ever loved, and the aversion of his wife, for the sake of an assured income. He was quite willing to reconcile himself to the stalled ox, even with the bitter seasoning of domestic hatred, rather than to continue his present life of shifts and expedients.

Very busy was Mr Glegg, of Goodeve and Glegg, family solicitors, of Bedford Row. He and a steady old confidential clerk were daily for hours at the Fountains, searching into the contents of all manner of receptacles for documents, docketing, comparing, inspecting, putting seals on desk, press, and drawer, and being strangely busy and silent. By this time it had oozed out into print that Mr Samuel Goodeve had been the victim of a 'violent and outrageous attack' in the public streets, and was still very ill in consequence of the brutal treatment which he had received. At anyrate, all the work of the firm devolved upon his partner, who was not unnaturally testy at the sudden strain upon his powers, so that he was barely civil to bland Mrs Hart, the housekeeper, and promptly silenced the old butler's deferential speeches. In truth, the whole household burned with a blameless curiosity as to the contents of 'my lady's' will. Of course everything went to 'Miss Beatrice'; but that cardinal rule once established, there was room for doubt as to the testamentary provisions. Was there a clause forbidding Miss Fleming's marriage with the obnoxious Sir Frederick, under pain of being disinherited? Would the property be vested in trustees, or go 'out and out,' to borrow the language of the tallest plush-clad Mercury, to the heiress? That there would be gifts of money and raiment to the denizens of the basement story, was reasonably held as assured. That annuities would be bequeathed for the maintenance of the oldest servants, was deemed more than likely. It was a disappointment when Mr Glegg's gruff reticence cut off all information on these heads. As for the confidential clerk, when the butler did once succeed

in inviting him into the commodious pantry, where a cobwebbed bottle and large glasses were in readiness, even the mellowed fire of that royal old Madeira, once laid down by Lord Livingston defunct, failed to loosen the tongue of that smoke-dried subordinate of the Law. 'The green seal was thrown away on him,' so the butler declared, almost with tears; 'four glasses—for the fellow sucked in four of em, mute as an oyster—didn't warm him up one bit.'

There were other mutes he long in attendance at the nabob's red-brick mansion, which had been stealthily pervaded, of late, by the satellites of that fashioner who purveys for us the last of our earthly requirements. There had been creeping and whispering, and smothered noises as of muffled tools cautiously at work, and all the hush and suppression that usage prescribes, until the preparations were complete for burying the dead out of sight. Then at last came the black horses, prancing in their decorous sleekness and strength, beneath their dismal load of sable finery, and the hearse with nodding plumes, and the black coaches, and the well-trained men in Death's black uniform, whose practised grasp is so familiar with the embossed silver handles of coroneted velvet-covered coffins. And so did they bear away, in decent pomp and staid ceremony, the body of the late mistress of the Fountains to its long home beneath a marble monument, in a flower-planted inclosure well railed in; and the chaplain of the cemetery yielded precedence to a more dignified clergyman than he, one of the noble family of Fleming, who had come down to read the burial-service over 'our dear sister departed.'

The last honours had been duly rendered to the dead. It was time, now, for the arrangement of the affairs of the living. Wherefore, the reading of the will at the Fountains was awaited with a very real anxiety.

SHARKS AND OTHER TORMENTS.

CONCEIVE the idea of a wide and tranquil, as well as hot, sea, some five miles off the mouth of a moderate-sized river in Central America; sharks in size and quantity, as if bespoke, cruising lazily round the ship as she rose and fell on the long ground-swell to some ninety fathoms of chain-cable; the crew black and white, work over, fishing for what they could get—chiefly dog-fish, bonito, and cavalli—and vociferating every moment: 'Oh! there he is again,' 'Almost as big as the cutter,' 'Look at this un down by the wheel.' Furnished with such special opportunity, he sought the butcher, who, provided with sufficient offal to make about half-a-dozen respectable mouthfuls for a shark, set to, to observe the demeanour of the animal. The bait had not been long on the surface of the water, when a black triangular fin appeared to leeward, coming straight up; when within about ten yards, it disappeared beneath the water, but almost instantaneously after a white flash was visible at intervals down several feet beneath the bait. This was the white belly of the shark—not turned up to take the bait, but exhibited at intervals as he dashed in wild circles round the object of his pursuit. I pause here to observe, that the first observer who narrated that peculiarity of the shark must have evidently paused here too, and taken the rest of the programme for granted, else he might have noticed

that the shark, having performed several gyrations, as if he were mad, suddenly ceased, swam slowly to the morsel, and, as the offal floated very high, pushed his great snout completely out of the water, and took down his food without altering his normal equilibrium. And what a mouth! A morsel as large as a man's head disappeared like a spoonful of raspberry jam! This experiment, repeated several times, was always attended with the same results.

Sharks appear to have keen noses; a piece of meat overboard in a sharky place is never left long unnoticed. They smell or detect in some way—and as I should imagine they are not very nice in their palate, the probability is in favour of the nose being the organ of discovery—anything objectionable, no matter how deftly concealed. It is often admirably stated as a fact that sharks are preceded by a little fish to act as pilot to the animal's prey. No doubt, there is a considerable amount of sagacity displayed by these pilot-fish; they are not, however, the disinterested creatures our authors would have us believe.

The fact is, the pilot-fish is nothing more than a parasite of the shark. He is a scaleless fish, from one to three feet in length, and is provided with a powerful sucker on the top of his head, whilst his under jaw projects considerably beyond the upper. He gives one the idea of an eel with his head put on upside down; but the use of such a formation is evident: he attaches himself to the shark at the angle or opening of the jaw by his sucker, and with his projecting shovel under-lip catches the morsels which drop from his master's mouth as he chews. Thus it happens that, there being only two convenient points of attachment on the shark's head, he is seldom accompanied by more than two fish. As to these fish themselves, their power of suction is so great, that a moderate-sized one will draw blood through a man's skin if allowed to attach itself. Eel-like, they remain active for a long time out of their native element, and can be made to adhere to any object for many minutes. The writer on one occasion tried the strength of one of them, about eighteen inches long, by allowing it to attach itself to a gun-case, with a double-barrelled gun and paraphernalia within. Lifting the fish by the tail, it raised the gun and case easily, and afterwards bore the addition of several heavy books without giving way. The appearance of the sucker is somewhat like a gridiron.

Sharks, though not to be compared to a leg of four-year-old mutton, furnish by no means a bad dinner to a hungry man. The negroes in Central America consider young shark's tail a delicacy, a compliment said not to be returned by the sharks. The writer has tried to satisfy himself as to the accuracy of this legend in shark-lore—namely, that it is only under pressure of hunger that a shark will banquet off negro, but has never been able to come to a conclusion from the evidence, as there are numerous instances of a dinner off nigger being preferred when the shark had his choice. Thus it happened once at Greytown, on the Mosquito Coast, in Central America. A large life-boat crossing the bar of the San Juan river, upset, precipitating the crew, consisting of two officers (white) and ten coloured men, into the water, the boat being turned upside down. 'I felt,' says the narrator, 'that my life was not worth half an hour's purchase. The cockswain of the boat, a weakly black man, rose alongside

of me after the plunge; he was in great terror; and I felt that even if the sharks did not harm him, he could scarcely reach the shore without help; so I encouraged him by telling him I would swim by him, and give him a hand if he felt tired. "No tired, massa; neber live to be tired; look at dem round us." I felt that he was about as close to the truth as possible, for we were literally in the centre of a shoal of sharks, whose black triangular fins we could see on all sides sailing round us. As the beach was quite close, we first endeavoured to make that, but soon discovered that the current was so strong that we made no headway; and we were forced to turn toward the boat, which was a hundred and fifty yards away, drifting out to sea, turned upside down, with the rest of the crew astride on her keel. There was nothing, however, for it but to swim to her; and aided by the strong current, we soon shortened the distance. All this time the sharks were around us, making, I fancied, smaller circles, and once or twice I thought I felt something touch my feet with a rush, as these horrid brutes do before they bite; if it was my imagination, it was not a great stretch, however, for we had not got twenty yards ahead of the spot, when my companion shrieked, threw up his arms, and disappeared beneath the waves. A rush of black fins, and their sudden disappearance under water, was the last thing I remember, until I found myself alongside our ship, in the stern-sheets of the cutter which had been sent to the rescue.

Considering the fool-hardy rashness of the negroes in bathing, it is surprising how comparatively few accidents happen. 'Dive for sixpence, massa,' into water where sharks have been seen the same morning; however, he will never venture in after dark. Sharks, like many other fish, bite more freely at night; in fact, sharky waters, where the fish are shy, and bathing is comparatively free from danger during the day, cannot be entered after nightfall without very great risk, the more especially that at night sharks will, like trout, prowl about shallow water barely sufficient to cover them. The writer recollects at Colon two stokers of the mail-steamer *Tyne* taking fore-castle leave one night. The ship was warped alongside the wharf, and these two men crept along one of the hawsers, hand over foot, to reach the wharf. The first got over safely; but the second slipped, and fell into the water. Not at all frightened, he, in a low voice, told his companion to lower him a rope from the wharf; but he had scarcely spoken when he disappeared, and did not rise again. A shark's stomach to a sailor is a matter of extreme interest. 'Let's see what's inside of him,' is Jack's first thought when the monster lies dead on the deck; though Jack is invariably disappointed of finding treasure—a silver watch, for example, would fill his soul with pleasure. The ultimate utilisation of the shark in his hands is to make a skeleton of the jaws, and a walking-stick of the spinal column.

That sharks will attack large boats bodily, is well known. Tampico, on the coast of Central America, is a place well known to sailors as famous for the most villainous of sharks. A large one on one occasion attacked a ship's boat entering the river, and shook it so as to be felt. Of course the story was pooh-poohed, on being related by the officer in charge, on his return to the ship; but, shortly after, when the boat was hauled up to the

davits, sharks' teeth were found stuck fast on each side of her keel. Possibly, this shark was a relation to the owner of the skeleton which adorns the United Service Museum, which was said to have nearly swallowed a boat. As I write these lines sitting under the awning on deck, a dead hot calm after a broiling day, the ship swinging lazily to the current of the Tampico river, I hear a loud splash. I rush to the side, and see three sharks swimming round an empty pork-barrel that the cook has just heaved overboard; in a few minutes, a dozen or so will be fighting round it. A story goes that on one occasion a shark managed to get himself into an empty cask, and having done so, that it righted, and he was, so to speak, drowned. However, I now can see the empty pork-barrel drifted a good distance away, spinning round and round under the impetus of a shoal of sharks. For the moment, the ship's neighbourhood is left to smaller fry—dog-fish, *Bonitos Barracontas*, and jelly-fish of different sorts. The prettiest of these latter are the Portuguese men-of-war (*Physalia*); iridescent like magnified soap-bubbles, they sail with the stream, with apparently as little purpose, and yet they live, and feed themselves with their long tentacles. One can, however, scarcely credit them with any endowment beyond reflex action. It is curious, however, to watch them as they float slowly by, opal-like; and curious to behold their little parasite—for they have a parasite too—as he swims in and out between the tentacles, keeping close to the roots. He is a tiny little fish like a minnow, and apparently makes use of his friend as a trap to catch his food.

Among the animal curiosities in warm South American countries are the ants, which burrow and swarm in certain districts. It is not pleasant to accidentally disturb a nest of black ants; but the white ants are fully more formidable. Those last mentioned are nearly half an inch long, and there are others larger, and there are also some as small as the head of the ordinary English ant. Two varieties are fond of inhabited houses, and very useful members of the community they make, as they consume a quantity of dead vegetable and animal matter that in a hot climate would otherwise rapidly decompose. The strength of these little animals is amusing: forty or fifty will seize a dead cockroach, and drag it up a wall; and yet, in comparison, they are so small, that the cockroach appears to be conveying himself to his own grave. Naturalists find the ants great pests, but, like every evil, they can be turned to good by a little control. There are no more delicate anatomists, and by employing the proper workmen, the most perfect specimens of skeleton-work may be produced. The writer for many months kept two colonies in his cabin—one lived in the tray of a water-colour box—for the purpose of preparing skeletons. A specimen—say a humming-bird—being placed on a shelf in a small box, within an hour a stream of ants might be seen wandering about in its vicinity. The next morning the body of the bird would be a black moving mass, whilst a regular living road, formed of ants going and returning, led from their nest to their prey. The naturalist must watch these workmen carefully, for having finished the feathers and soft parts, they will begin to eat the bones; so that when the skeleton is nearly clean, it is necessary to employ more delicate artisans. These are the very tiny yellow ants, so small as to be scarcely visible at a short distance.

The skeleton must be placed near them in a box with a single minute aperture, and then they work diligently, consuming the tendons, skin, or any other soft part left by their predecessors: they do not touch the bones, which afterwards should be varnished, and kept in camphor, a drug detested by all the species.

Walking along the line of the Panama Railway, one may see any day a long narrow streak, as if of green paint, on the red earth alongside the rails; on approaching a little closer, the streak of paint is seen to be alive; and a closer inspection shews it to be composed of thousands of large red ants, each carrying a bit of green leaf in its jaws. The negroes tell you that they put these leaves over their heads when a shower comes on. 'Yes, massa, he do; he no like de rain, an dat his umbella.' However, it is more than probable that Sambo's imagination is at fault. These paths of ants often are over a mile in length, and are at least two inches wide—about fifteen to twenty individuals take up the square inch—I shall leave the number in a mile to be worked out by the boys at Christmas. It is a curious fact that snakes have a strong personal antipathy to these ant-paths, and will not cross them without a great necessity. As I have mentioned snakes, I may as well say what I have to say of them. There are a good many venomous snakes in Central America and the West India Islands. The rattlesnake abounds in Demerara, and I believe the bush-master; the tigrelo in Santa Martha. This is a venomous little beast that kills in a couple of hours. I recollect walking one evening with a shipmate along one of the acacia-shaded lanes outside the city of Santa Martha, when one of these snakes coiled round his leg. He fortunately had a whip in his hand, with which he struck and killed it. The rat-tail snake—so called because its tail is prolonged and finished like that of the rat—is a vicious animal, the poison being very active.

The history of the rat-tail snake in Martinique is rather peculiar. It flourished there to such an extent that of late years every cane-piece that was cut was accountable for at least one death by snake-bite. It was originally imported to destroy rats—its favourite prey—which infested and destroyed the sugar-cane. Within the last few years, the people of Martinique have adopted another member of the snake brotherhood—a non-poisonous but very voracious species. The carpet-snake is a black snake with a white belly, and he appears to have conceived the most insatiable enmity against the rat-tail snake: a sight of one throws him into a state of semi-insanity; and if you find a gorged carpet-snake, his meal is sure to be a rat-tail snake a few inches longer than himself. The most marvellous thing is that the rat-tail appears to become quite paralysed, and his poison, if used, has no effect on the other snake. On one occasion I saw a carpet-snake thrown alive into a bottle of white rum. As he struggled in death, a curious phenomenon arose; he appeared to grow longer, commencing at his head, the growing half being of a different colour. At last, when the struggles, gyrations, and twistings ceased, it was found that he had disgorged the whole of a rat-tail snake, except the head: he died with that in his jaws. The rat-tail is fast disappearing before the carpet-snake in Martinique, but it still remains in sufficient numbers in both that island and St

Lucia to render it necessary for the pedestrian to be careful where he puts his foot. Death generally follows in an hour if the uncovered flesh be bitten.

The choice between being squeezed to death or poisoned is generally open to the traveller in tropical America, some of the constrictor snakes being of enormous size and strength. Picking your steps through a swampy bit, and finding the log you are about to step upon is an enormous boa-constrictor; or having undressed in a shady nook to revel in a mountain stream, the thermometer at a hundred in the shade, to find yourself pursued by a little water-snake (they are always ready to fight), with death for a dozen strong men in his fangs; or, instead of a mellow guava, you put your hand on a tree-snake—are some of the pleasing adventures (to read about) which wanderers under the sun meet with.

ODDS AND ENDS:

FROM DR ROBERT CHAMBERS'S SCRAP-BOOK.

A BORROWED GARMENT.—Gifts are sometimes a source of torture to the receiver, and they had better never have been accepted. A gentleman who came home with a considerable fortune from abroad, found a sister in not very good circumstances with a husband rather advanced in life, and a large family. Filled with emotions of kindness towards his poor relatives, he bought for them a house and small piece of land, which he professed to confer upon them in free gift, though it turned out that he only gave his sister the life-rent of it. Living in the neighbourhood, he was constantly interfering in the management of the property, so that his brother-in-law soon found he had scarcely any free agency in the matter, and that the gift was a constant source of trouble. The condition of the unhappy brother-in-law reminds me of a droll incident I heard told of a man who was so indiscreet as to borrow a pair of breeches to go to a ball. Having gone to the ball with the friend who had lent the garment, said friend kept close beside him, to watch over the interests of his property, and when the unfortunate wearer was about to sit down in any place, he would ever say: 'Oh, you must not sit down there; take care of the breeches,' and so on, till the poor fellow found he was to have no comfort in his borrowed attire. For him the fun of the evening was spoiled, and he went home quite chop-fallen. His disgust did not end here. Soon afterwards, another ball being about to take place, he was mentioning to a friend that he did not intend to go, for not having a proper pair of breeches of his own, and having borrowed a pair on the last occasion, he had been affronted and rendered miserable by the proprietor of the garment always coming up to him to warn him against sitting here and sitting there. This second friend said that if he would go, he would give him a spare pair, free from the troubles he had undergone at the last ball, on which the man thankfully consented. However, when the two friends got into the ball-room, the borrower found himself no better off than before, for his patron, in a spirit of confiding generosity, was

always coming up to him, and saying: Now, be quite at your ease; sit where you like, and dance as much as you please. Never mind me; use your freedom; caper about to your heart's content,' and so forth, till the unfortunate man was in a state of distraction. At no future ball would he have anything to do with borrowed attire.

BAD PEOPLE.—Fielding makes one of his characters remark that bad people will always be most backward to assert that human nature is necessarily and universally evil. 'Knave,' it is remarked, 'will no more endeavour to persuade us of the baseness of mankind, than a highwayman will inform that there are thieves on the road.' I do not suppose that knaves think much about the matter, but it always may be observed that one often hears exceedingly bad accounts of human nature, but from persons whose lives are all but purity itself—from amiable enthusiasts, from gentle inoffensive women, and so forth. The truth is, the world is not so bad as it is called. People heedlessly reason from a few conspicuous cases of evil conduct. They do not think of the vast amount of good which is modestly spread around them.

A SPIRITED GIRL.—I have just fallen upon a piece of an American newspaper (apparently about 1837) in which is mentioned the following incident, respecting a spirited girl of seventeen years of age in Illinois. She was an heiress to an estate valued at ten thousand dollars, and ran away with a young man who paid his addresses to her, taking with her an acquaintance as bridesmaid. Her guardian believing her lover to be wholly unworthy of her, refused his consent to her marriage; so she went off to be married at a distance from home, on the further side of the Mississippi. When the party reached that river, the ice was running furiously, and any attempt to cross would be full of danger. A boat being procured, the young lady, in momentary expectation of being followed by her guardian, wished instantly to push from the shore, and all embarked on the perilous voyage. The party had nearly reached the head of an island, about a third of the distance from the opposite shore, when the current became more rapid, the cakes of ice very large, and their situation extremely dangerous. The lover, excessively frightened, and forgetful of everybody but his own dear self, bawled out in the most piteous accent: 'Oh, I shall be drowned! I shall be drowned!'—and bitterly reproached his lady-love as the cause of his probable death. She uttered not a word—her courage and presence of mind seemed to increase with the peril. A tremendous cake of ice fairly capsized the boat, but it was so large that all got on it. The lover rendered her no assistance at all. It bore them to the head of the island, and, as good fortune would have it, the stream between it and the Missouri shore was frozen over, and they crossed without difficulty. They reached a tavern near the river; and after changing their wet garments and becoming warm at a good fire, the lover hinted to the young lady that it was time now for them to have the knot tied, as the magistrate had arrived for that purpose, and was in the next room. She gave him a most withering look of contempt, and declared she would never unite her destiny with one who

was selfish and cowardly. It was in vain that he attempted by entreaty and argument to change her resolution—she was immovable, and replied to him with scorn. A few days afterwards she returned to the house of her guardian, thankful that she had escaped marrying a man whose only object was her fortune. Her lover returned to this side of the river also, but such showers of ridicule and contempt were bestowed upon him, that he found it best to decamp, which he did, leaving behind him a host of unpaid demands. The story has this moral, that young ladies should be careful with whom they attempt to run away.

OXFORD IN THE GOOD OLD TIMES.—Shortly after Francis Jeffrey went to Oxford, where he entered Queen's College (1791), he was requested by a Highland friend to drop him some English ideas. Jeffrey answered in his usual vivacious manner. We present a few passages from his letter, as quoted in the *Inverness Courier*: 'My dear fellow, I am as much, nay more a Scotchman than I was while an inhabitant of Scotland! My opinions, ideas, prejudices, and systems are all Scotch. The only part of a Scotchman I mean to abandon is the language, and the language is all I expect to learn in England. And, indeed, except it be drinking, I see nothing else that it seems possible to acquire in this place. If I could make you walk down my staircase, I think I could satisfy you that we understand how to riot in a college. There you would see the fragments of ten doors which were broken to pieces last night—there you would see all the shattered and splintered frames of the windows, without one pane of glass entire, and the railing of the stair itself violently torn from more than one half of it, and lying on the landing-place, a trophy of their [the students'] prowess. Nor were their depredations confined to my neighbourhood, but extended over the whole college.' This is a sad picture of college life at Oxford eighty years ago, but it is confirmed by statements in Lord Eldon's memoirs. Jeffrey was not very successful in speaking English, as the language is usually spoken by a well-educated native. In fact, he spoiled his own tongue in the attempt at improving it. Till the last, he spoke in a mincing affected style, in which respect he was unhappily imitated by a number of admirers at the Scottish bar. The fashion is wearing out.

NOVEMBER.

NOVEMBER, month abhorred, is here again,
And here again her foul attendants are—
Dank fogs, and dismal, dirty, drizzling rain,
And nightly glooms obscuring every star.
Earth, abject-looking, lies disrobed and drear;
And Nature, night by night, and morn by morn,
With cold feet thrust 'mong fallen leaves and sere,
Chill shivering sits, and mourns, forlorn, forlorn.
Now all things own a great restraining power;
Suppressed their functions seem, and full their cup
Of misery wide and deep. No bud or flower
Cheers the dull land; while not a bird tunes up,
Save that a robin pipes from some bare tree,
Not its spring song of hope, but one of memory.

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